

When Was Christ Born?

Where is there Biblical authority for the celebration of Christmas? Does the Bible command Christians to observe the birthday of Christ? Strange as it may seem, there is no scripture commanding Christians to observe a wintertime holiday season! Here is why!

by Ernest Martin

THE FACTS about the origin of Christmas will startle you! Abundant historical evidence proves beyond doubt that Christmas is not of Biblical origin at all. The festival, believe it or not, had its beginnings hundreds of years before the birth of Christianity. "Christmas" customs were being observed by almost the whole Western world centuries before Christ!

Whence Comes Christmas?

The largest religious cult which fostered the celebration of December 25 as a holiday throughout the Roman and Greek worlds was pagan sun worship — Mithraism. The chief deity in this religion was the "Sun Goddess" — the Oriental goddess of the heavens, called "the Queen of Heaven." The season of the year when this goddess received her greatest adoration from the pagan world was at the time of the winter solstice in December. This winter festival was called "*the Nativity*" — the Nativity of the Sun.

Sir James Frazer in his monumental work on ancient religion, *The Golden Bough*, relates that during the second and third centuries after Christ an intense rivalry was apparent between professing Christianity and this old pagan religion of Mithraism. Of course, Christianity managed in the end to suppress this strongly implanted pagan creed, but the victory was in name only. History shows a good deal of compromise was effected by the early Church leaders with the teachings of Mithraism. Notice: "An instructive relic of the long struggle between Christianity and Mithraism is preserved in our

festival of Christmas, which the Church seems to have *borrowed directly from its heathen rival*. In the Julian Calendar the 25th of December was regarded as the Nativity of the Sun. . . . The ritual of the nativity, as appears to have been celebrated in Syria and Egypt, was remarkable. The celebrants retired into certain inner shrines, from which *at midnight* they issued with a loud cry, 'The Virgin has brought forth! The light is waxing.' The Egyptians even represented the newborn *sun* by the *image of an infant* [remember, this was before Christ] which *ON HIS BIRTHDAY*, the winter solstice, they brought forth and exhibited to his worshippers" (from *The Golden Bough*, St. Martin's ed., pp. 471, 472).

The similarity between this ancient pagan rite and the modern Christmas is as striking as it is obvious!

Let us notice yet another fact recorded by Frazer concerning this winter festival. "No doubt the Virgin who thus conceived and bore a son on the 25th of December was the great Oriental goddess whom the Semites called the Heavenly Virgin or simply the Heavenly Goddess" (p. 472).

This "Heavenly Goddess" was the pagan Queen of Heaven whose worship (with all her festivals) is utterly condemned in the Bible. Read it for yourself in Jeremiah 7:17-20; 44:15-29.

History Speaks

"What led the ecclesiastical authorities to institute the festival of Christmas? The motives for the innovation are stated with great frankness by a Syrian writer [5th century A.D.]. . . . 'It was the custom of the heathen to cele-

brate on the same 25th of December *the birthday of the Sun*, at which [time] they kindled lights in token of festivity. In these solemnities and festivities the Christians *also took part*. Accordingly when the doctors of the Church perceived that the Christians had a leaning to this festival, they took counsel and resolved that the true nativity [of Christ] should be solemnized *on that day*,'" concludes Frazer's quote.

Can the Birthday of Christ Be Known?

The major reason December 25th was chosen to commemorate Christ's birthday was that it represented the chief religious day among most of the heathen. The Church authorities erroneously reasoned that it was proper to replace the sun god with the son of God — Christ.

Hardly any of the early scholars really believed that Christ was born on December 25. In fact, there were all types of guesses by the men of the fourth and fifth centuries, and almost everyone disagreed. (See *Smith's Dictionary of Christian Antiquities*, Vol. 1, p. 358.) But the people just couldn't give up celebrating the season.

The truth is, no man knew — or knows — when Christ was born! The Gospels say nothing as to the day of His birth. This lack of reference is in itself significant. If God had wanted Christians to celebrate His birthday, He surely would have told His people when it was!

This omission also shows how unconcerned the Gospel writers were over the exact date of Christ's birth. To the early Christians, there was nothing

especially significant in a *birthday*. Actually, the only two instances of birthday celebration in the Bible refer to evil men. Notice Genesis 40:20 where Pharaoh's birthday was observed, and also Matthew 14:6-10, where it describes Herod's birthday party and the beheading of John the Baptist.

Only the heathen celebrated their birthdays in Bible times. No wonder, then, that the early Church never observed the birthday of Christ. That was a custom of the heathen, not of God's people! The *Catholic Encyclopedia* states: "In the scripture, sinners alone, not saints, celebrate their birthdays." (See the article "Christmas," 1908 edition, Vol. 3, p. 724.)

Thus, it becomes easy to understand why the question of Christ's birth did not really become important until the fourth and fifth centuries. At this time, the matter was looked into because of the influx of pagans into the "Church" and because of their adherence to their old customs — wanting to celebrate the birthdays of *their* old gods. So, to please the pagans, December 25 was chosen.

In What Season Was Christ Born?

Even though there are no records which show the date of Christ's birth, there is sufficient evidence within the Bible itself which clearly reveals that His birth was nowhere near, *of all days*, December 25.

First, to show this, let us consider the time of Christ's ministry, which we find revealed in the Bible.

Daniel 9:27 shows that Christ would preach the Gospel for three and one-half years (one half of a prophetic week). Just as a natural week has seven days, a *prophetic* week has seven *prophetic* days wherein *each day equals one year*. (See Numbers 14:34 and Ezekiel 4:6.) Daniel, then, is speaking about a seven-year period. In the *midst* of that period, that is, at the end of three and one-half years (or three and one-half prophetic days), Christ's earthly ministry would come to an end.

What does this show? Very much!

We know that Christ's ministry

came to an end at Passover time in A.D. 31. (For proof of this, write for our free booklet, *The Crucifixion Was Not on Friday*.) Then 3½ years preceding the spring of A.D. 31 would put the commencement of His ministry in the early *autumn* of A.D. 27.

But what does this prove? Let us see!

The Gospel further tells us that Christ began His ministry just as He was approaching 30 years of age (Luke 3:23). This was the age required by the Old Testament to which priests must attain before they could be installed as official ministers and preachers (Num. 4:3). The Jews also considered that 30 years of age was the age of maturity and real manhood.

Notice what this indication shows. Since Christ was just about 30 years old when He began His ministry in early *autumn*, A.D. 27, this clearly shows He was born sometime *in the early autumn* of 4 B.C. — 30 years before!

Autumn the Only Possible Season!

There are many proofs which point to an early autumn birth of Christ. For example, if Christ had been born in any of the seasons preceding autumn 4 B.C. (that is, spring or summer of 4 B.C.), He would have been *past* 30 at the commencement of His ministry. But the Scripture says He was *about* or *approaching* 30.

Also, let us consider the season immediately *after* autumn 4 B.C. — the winter. If He had been born in the winter of 4-3 B.C., then He could, of course, have been under 30 when He began preaching (as the Gospel says). But this season is out of the question! Here is why: We have the plain testimony of the Scriptures that the flocks were still *in the fields* at the time of Christ's birth (Luke 2:8). The flocks were never in the fields in Palestine during the winter season. They were kept inside barns or in protected places during the months from mid-October to mid-March. (See *Clarke's Commentary* on Luke 2:8.) The late autumn and winter seasons of Palestine were too severe for the flocks to remain in the open and unprotected from the rain, wind and frost. Notice

Matthew 24:20 for a reference to Palestinian winters.

These facts alone prove that *early autumn* 4 B.C. is the only conceivable period in which Christ could have been born!

More Proof: The Temple Ritual!

In the New Testament we have another important chronological feature which will show the season of Christ's birth. It concerns the time periods in which the Levitical priesthood served in the Temple. By comparing these prescribed times with certain New Testament references, we can arrive at the very season for the birth of Christ.

In the days of Christ, the Aaronic priesthood, which offered the sacrifices in the Temple at Jerusalem, was divided into 24 separate divisions. Each division (called a *course*) had one chief priest who was chosen by lot to represent the whole division in the Temple for a week's period. This chief priest was to offer the evening and morning sacrifices and the incense offerings.

The priesthood had been divided into 24 courses by David. In his time there were so many priests that all could not possibly serve in the Sanctuary at the same time. So David divided them into 24 courses and gave instructions that one course should serve in the Sanctuary for one week, then the next course could serve the following week, etc. These 24 courses of the priesthood are described in I Chronicles 24. The names of the individual courses are given from verse 7 through 19.

We are further told by Jewish records that each of these courses began serving at noon on a Sabbath and continued their service until noon the next Sabbath — a one-week period (*Talmud, Sukkah*, 55b, footnote 5, p. 270). The Jewish historian, Josephus, who lived during the time of the Apostle Paul and was himself a priest belonging to the first of the 24 courses (*Josephus' Life*, 1), also tells us that each one of these courses served for one week, from Sabbath to Sabbath (*Antiquities*, vii, 14, 7).

The Jewish records again tell us that the courses also served biannually — twice in the year. That is, the first

course would begin serving in the spring of the year, on the first week of the sacred year. The second course would serve the second week, etc. This went on until the twenty-fourth course had served. Then, in the autumn of the year, at the first week of the civil year, the first course would commence again and all of the courses would repeat the order. Thus, on each of the 48 weeks during the year one particular course of the priests served in the Temple.

But, added to these 48 weeks are 3 extra weeks in the year during which ALL 24 of the courses served together. These 3 weeks were during the three major Holy Day periods: the Passover in the beginning of spring, Pentecost in late spring, and Tabernacles in the early autumn. Because multitudes of people were always in Jerusalem at these three times of the year, ALL 24 courses of the priests stayed on in Jerusalem and served together in the Temple (*Talmud, Sukkah*, 55b).

So, the 51 weeks of the Hebrew calendar are accounted for. (Occasionally, a 13th month was added to the calendar to allow the months to remain in their proper seasons of the year. When this extra month was added, the priests who officiated in the 12th month repeated their service in the 13th — *Talmud, Megillah*, 6b).

It is important to realize that the *first course* of these 24 divisions began their ministrations with the first Sabbath in the first Hebrew month — that was Nisan, in the very early spring. See especially I Chronicles 27:1, 2 and following verses.

With this information, it becomes possible to know the particular weeks in which each of the 24 priestly courses served in the Temple. And consequently, we can know the time period in which some significant New Testament events took place. Let us now see the importance of this information with regard to Christ's birth.

The Course of Abijah

In the Gospel of Luke we are told that a certain priest named Zacharias was performing his service in the

Temple at Jerusalem when a most marvelous thing happened. He was privately told that his wife Elisabeth, who was quite advanced in years, was going to conceive and bear a son and that the son's name was to be John.

This, of course, is familiar to us all. But I wonder how many have noticed the time period in which Zacharias received this information? Let us notice this section of Scripture closely.

"There was in the days of Herod, the king of Judaea, a certain priest named Zacharias, OF THE COURSE OF ABIA [Abijah in Hebrew]: and his wife was of the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elisabeth" (Luke 1:5).

This scripture clearly tells us the particular course of the 24 priestly divisions that Zacharias was serving in. *It was the course of Abijah*

Notice further:

"And it came to pass, that while he executed the priest's office before God IN THE ORDER OF HIS COURSE, according to the custom of the priest's office, his lot was to burn incense when he went into the Temple of the Lord" (Luke 1:8, 9).

Now this is very significant! It shows that Zacharias was serving *in the prescribed time intended* for the course of Abijah. By referring to I Chronicles 24:10, you will see that the course of Abijah *was the eighth in order!*

This plainly means that he was ministering *in the ninth week* after the beginning of God's first month Nisan. The reason it was the ninth week and not the eighth is that the Passover season always occurs in the first month and during *the third week*. Since all 24 courses served that particular week, according to the laws set down by David, this means that Zacharias officiated during the ninth week after the beginning of Nisan, the first month in spring.

Now comes the question: On what days did Zacharias serve?

The year in which all of this occurred was 5 B.C. The first day of Nisan in this year was a Sabbath, the very day on which the first priestly course began its ministrations. On our Roman calendar, this day was April 6. Thus, by simple

arithmetic, Zacharias, who served in the ninth week, was serving from Iyar 27 to Sivan 5 (June 1 to June 8). This was the time he was told that his wife was going to conceive and bear a son. But let us go one step further.

There was no chance of Zacharias' leaving immediately after the ninth week to return home. Why? Because the next week was a Holy Day "week" — it was Pentecost! Zacharias was obliged to remain over one more week with the other 23 priestly courses and serve in the Temple. This extra service kept him in Jerusalem until Sivan 12, or June 15. At that time he was free to return to his home.

Now why are all these dates important? We will see if we pay attention to what the sacred writer tells us.

"And it came to pass, that, *as soon as the days of his ministration were accomplished*, he departed to his own house" (Luke 1:23).

This shows Zacharias returned home immediately after his ministrations and then his wife conceived (verse 24). This would have occurred about the first week after he returned from Jerusalem. Gabriel had told him that he was to remain dumb, completely speechless, until the child was born. It should be obvious that no man would want to stay in such a condition — and certainly no longer than necessary. And too, Zacharias was a righteous man and was anxious to see God's command fulfilled. So, with reasonable assurance, Elisabeth must have conceived sometime immediately after Pentecost week! This week was from Sivan 12 to Sivan 19 (mid-June).

With this information we are able to come to the exact season for John the Baptist's birth.

The human gestation period is very near 280 days or 9 months and 10 days. If we go forward this amount of time from about Sivan 16 or mid-June in 5 B.C., we arrive *at about the first of Nisan* (March 27th), 4 B.C. The birth of John the Baptist was undoubtedly near this time — in the very early spring.

Now, let us come to the main question: What about the birth of Christ?

The Gospel says that Christ was just

6 months younger than John the Baptist (Luke 1:26-27, 36). And, by adding this six months to the time of John's birth (the 1st of Nisan), we come to about the 1st of Tishri or near mid-September for the birth of Christ. So again, we arrive at *an early autumn birth for Christ*. So Christ was not born in the winter after all!

Other Substantiating Information

There are many other evidences which show Christ's early autumn birth. For one, we are told that Joseph and Mary went to Bethlehem to be taxed (Luke 2:1-5). At first sight we might think that this may have been the *only* reason for their journey from Galilee to Bethlehem. Such, however, was not the case. For if the journey were for taxation purposes alone, *only Joseph*, the head of the house, would have been required by law to go. There were absolutely no Roman or Jewish laws which required Mary's presence. But yet, Mary went with Joseph. This fact alone has puzzled commentators for centuries. *Why* was Mary there?

The fact is, this taxation was coincident with the end of the agricultural year in Palestine — that is, in the early autumn just before the Feast of Tabernacles. It was customary to pay taxes on agricultural products at the end of the civil year — at the end of the harvest. For example, the Law of God commanded that the tithes of agricultural products should be paid year by year (Deut. 14:22). The civil year for tithes and taxes was reckoned from early autumn to early autumn. Even the Jews today adhere to this method of reckoning the ending of the civil years. And also in ancient Palestine, the agricultural or civil year ended and began on the first of Tishri (Hebrew calendar) — in early autumn.

Some, however, assume that while all this was very true among the Jews, this particular taxation was decreed by Augustus Caesar, the Roman Emperor (Luke 2:1). Thus, they conclude, it must have been conducted in the Roman manner and not dependent upon Jewish laws. This assumption is not consistent with the facts of history. At the time of

this taxing, Judaea was merely a "protectorate" of Rome. The Romans did not exact *direct* taxes from the people during this early period. They were receiving tribute from Herod, but the Romans allowed Herod to gather the taxes *as he saw fit*. And, it is plainly known that Herod was endeavoring to follow the customary laws of the Jews. Even the most critical of scholars hold that this particular taxation in 4 B.C. was conducted purely in the Jewish manner (*Encyclopaedia Biblica*, cols. 3994-3996). This is, then, a plain indication that the taxation was very near the 1st of Tishri (the early autumn) — the ending of the civil year in Palestine when such things were common.

This, again, shows an early autumn birth for Christ.

Why "No Room at the Inn"?

Many people have wondered why there was such a large crowd of people in Bethlehem at the time of Christ's birth. Of course, there was the taxation at the time (Luke 2:1), but it never was customary for *many* people to crowd a town and stay there for a period of time just for taxation purposes. And, as already mentioned, why did Mary journey to the south with Joseph when there was no Roman or Jewish law which commanded her presence at such a place of taxation?

The reason these historical indications are "difficulties" to many Biblical commentators, and seem to be beyond explanation, is because most people fail to realize the true time of year all these things took place.

Actually, Joseph and Mary had gone to Bethlehem just at the end of the Jewish *civil* year. They would have been there at just the beginning of the Hebrew seventh month of Tishri. During this particular month, Jerusalem and all the immediate towns were filled with people who had come to observe the Holy Days in this seventh month: the Feast of Trumpets, the Day of Atonement, and the Feast of Tabernacles.

Bethlehem was one of the towns right near Jerusalem (about 5 miles south) and was considered in the "festival area" of Jerusalem. (See *Talmud*,

Shekalim, vii, 4.) When people came to keep the ordained Holy Days of God, Bethlehem became filled with people. Josephus, the Jewish historian, mentions that it was customary for over 2 million Jews to go to Jerusalem for Passover (one of the Holy Days). (See *Wars*, vi, 9, 3.) Normally, Jerusalem was a city of only 120,000 inhabitants. You can imagine what these 2 million people would do to the housing situation in Jerusalem and the surrounding towns. No wonder, then, that in Bethlehem "there was no room in the inn" (Luke 2:7). The time Christ was born was at a season when Bethlehem was filled with people coming to observe the Holy Days at Jerusalem.

And, no wonder that *we find Mary along with Joseph*. It was customary for Joseph and Mary (and later their family) to go to Jerusalem for the Holy Festivals (Luke 2:41; John 7:1-10). And, since this autumn time was the end of the civil year in Palestine, a normal year-end taxation by Herod was also associated with this period. Joseph did not want to leave his wife home alone *since he had to go to pay taxes* and then observe the Feast. It could hardly be plainer!

What Was the Inn?

It is also interesting to note that the "inn" in which Joseph and Mary were to stay was not an ordinary caravan hotel. This word in the Greek is used only two other times in the Bible — Mark 14:14 and Luke 22:11. In both places it refers exclusively to temporary "guestchambers" which housed people in Jerusalem *during the festival periods*. And, since Bethlehem was one of the "overflow" towns which housed many of the people coming to Jerusalem for the Holy Days, it is readily understandable why such "guestchambers" would be in Bethlehem as well.

Actually, these "guestchambers" were primarily in the private homes of people who had opened up their rooms for the influx of people attending the Feast.

Rather than remaining at home as ordinarily would have been done, Mary had to come to Bethlehem, and while residing in the "overflow" town of

Bethlehem (there being no room for them except in a manger), Christ was born.

With this evidence, we can confidently place the birth of Christ sometime in the early autumn, undoubtedly in the seventh Hebrew month. It could not possibly have been in any other season!

We have Christ's ministry commencing in autumn, A.D. 27, right near His 30th year. This places His birth in the early autumn of 4 B.C.

Also, the time for the eighth course of Abijah indicates that John the Baptist was born very near the first of Nisan, 4 B.C. — the early spring. Christ was born six months after John — or again, in the early autumn.

We know that this particular taxation mentioned in Luke was reckoned after the Jewish manner. Their civil or harvest year also ended in the early autumn.

And too, there was no room in the "guestchamber," for there were many

people staying in Bethlehem for a period of time. This again corroborates the early autumn birth — during the festival period of the Hebrew seventh month.

But still, with all these indications of the proper season of Christ's birth, *we still do not know the exact day!!!* God never intended us to determine it!

Let us wake up to the truth about Christmas and quit the pagan superstitions we have inherited from childhood! □

Was CHRIST Born "B.C."?

How COULD Jesus have been born in 4 B. C.? B. C. means "BEFORE Christ"! Then HOW could Christ have possibly been born "BEFORE Christ"? Read the surprising answer!

by Garner Ted Armstrong

THE *real time* of the birth of Christ has mystified millions! You may have been stunned, *shocked* to learn in the previous article that Jesus was NOT born on or anywhere near December 25th! You may have been MYSTIFIED to learn He was born, *not* in the winter at all, but in the AUTUMN of 4 B.C.!

But how could this be? *How* could Jesus have possibly been born in the year 4 B.C.? Hundreds wrote, questioning, wondering!

Where Did We Get Our Calendar?

Think a moment! *Did all the world* suddenly begin to reckon *time* differently at the birth of Christ? Did everyone announce that from this point on, they would begin year A.D. 1 (Anno Domini, or "Year of Our Lord")? Did the whole Western world suddenly begin *counting time* the same way YOU have always counted time?

Why, of course not! Herod *himself* didn't know the exact time of Jesus' birth, and killed all the children up to two years of age. He must have been guessing by at least as much or more than ONE FULL YEAR.

Remember — at the birth of Christ, the wise men, or *magi*, saw a star. They followed the star (the Bible uses stars as symbols of angels — Rev. 1:20; 12:4) to the place where Christ lay. When Herod tried to have Jesus killed, he sought to find from the wise men NOT the date of Christ's *birth*, but the *time when the star* appeared (Matt. 2:7). God very carefully obscured the exact DATE of the birth of Christ. When Herod tried to kill Christ by having *all* the babies slain, he included "all the children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the coasts thereof, *from two years old and under*, according to the time which he had diligently enquired of the wise men" (Matt. 2:16).

The Jews in Palestine were then counting time according to the regnal years of their rulers (Luke 3:1). The Chinese count time totally differently than we do, or than do the Jews. The Mohammedans, or the adherents of Islam, reckon time from the *Hegira*, or the fabled flight of Mohammed from Mecca to Medina.

In the so-called "Christian" world, we are now supposedly living in the year One Thousand Nine Hundred

Seventy After Christ. But are we, really?

A Pagan Calendar!

Believe it or not, our whole method of counting time is completely PAGAN. All your plans, your calendar markings, your "dates" with friends have *always* been set according to *pagan, heathen* days and seasons.

Did you ever analyze the very names of the days? SUNDAY is the chief day of the professing Christian world — or the day specially dedicated to the SUN god, NOT the SON of God! MONDAY is the second day of the week, and the day of the MOON god. In other languages, such as the Romance tongues, the word "LUNES" (having the same Latin root as our word "lunar") is used. When you use the term "looney," referring to someone who is crazy, you are actually reverting to an ancient superstition that people became "moonstruck" or went crazy because of the influence of the MOON. TUESDAY comes next. The day dedicated to MARS. In the Spanish language, the word for Tuesday is MARTES. Then comes WEDNESDAY. Did you ever have trouble learning to spell the name of this day? Why? Didn't you

think the N should come *before* the D? But it can't. Because it must preserve the name of WEDN, or WODEN, which was a Norse name for MERCURY. In Spanish, the name for Wednesday is MIERCOLES.

There's much more. THURSDAY is obvious, isn't it? It is the day of THOR, the ancient Norse god of THUNDER. FRIDAY derives its name from FREYIA, the ancient goddess of the Teutonic peoples. In the Romance languages, it is called VENERI or VIERNES, which means a *venerable* day, after the supposition that Christ was crucified on a Friday, which He was not. Because of this supposition, people have regarded Friday as the UNLUCKY day.

Then comes the seventh day of the week, the day of which *Jesus* is the real LORD (Mark 2:27-28), but which the pagan calendar calls the day of SATURN, another name for NIMROD. Had you ever faintly realized these things before? If we are a really "Christian" society, why do we still sprinkle our very BASIC customs liberally with PAGAN deities of bygone HEATHEN religions? Even our huge missiles are named after these ancient pagan gods.

But what about the MONTHS? The very same thing has happened. The Romans, and then the professing Christian world, adopted, and many times *adapted* the same old PAGAN calendar, calling the names of the months, NOT after the divinely revealed pattern of the Bible, but after the god "Janus" or "Juno" or in honor of a pagan emperor, such as Julius or Augustus.

Even the Years Are Wrong!

But what about the DATE, today? *Are* we really living in the One Thousand Nine Hundred Seventieth year *since* Christ's birth?

No! We are not. Actually, until about September of "1970," *we will have been living* in the 1973rd year since the birth of Christ.

Let's understand. *God* did not

instruct man regarding the manner of reckoning time according to A.D. or B.C. This is a devising of MAN'S. And, just like nearly *everything* man has attempted to do, it is corrupt.

The present-day *method* of calculating years and epochs was first established by Dionysius the Little, a Roman abbot, and began to be used only in *parts* of Italy, and did not reach France until the 8th century.

The Florentines continued to use a *totally different* method of reckoning the passage of years, until even as late as the 18th century. Further, different peoples, according to location and religion, *began* the years on different dates, and in different months.

Do you see? Nothing but chaos and confusion. But God is not the *author of confusion!* (I Cor. 14:33.)

It was Dionysius who began assigning the years *prior* to Christ as those "Ante Christum," or, in English, "Before Christ," and those following the *supposed* date of His birth as "Anno Domini" or, "Year of Our Lord."

Who was Dionysius? Merely a Roman Catholic abbot who lived in the 6th century. His method of dividing the years with the *supposed* time of the birth of Christ has led to countless difficulties.

For instance, astronomers, counting either backward or forward, insert a year "0" between A.D. 1 and 1 B.C. Chronologers and historians do not. Isn't it a little confusing to use two totally different systems, the one the exact *opposite* of the other, when reckoning time?

Not only do historians and chronologers resort to a double manner of reckoning, but they must also remember that the cycles of the leap years are totally different in the years "B.C."

Dionysius was supposedly a *learned man*. He was a highly skilled theologian according to the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. But learned in *what*? Why, in the *traditions* he had always heard,

in the practices and customs of those around him, and in the "knowledge" he gleaned from the accepted ideas of other human beings of his day. He was exactly like any other human being, born into a "ready-made" society, and simply *taking for granted* the things he was taught.

What about it? Was Dionysius able to be completely objective? Was he completely honest with himself — driven only by the intellectual and philosophical pursuit of new knowledge and truth? Or was he striving to see how he could devise a method which would blend the *pagan* customs with the "Christian" ones?

To this Hislop replies: "The instrument in accomplishing this amalgamation [concealing PAGANISM by calling it "Christian"] was the abbot Dionysius the Little, to whom also we owe it, as modern chronologers have demonstrated, that the date of the Christian era, or of the *birth of Christ Himself* was MOVED FOUR YEARS FROM THE TRUE TIME!" (Alexander Hislop, *The Two Babylons*, p. 105, emphasis mine.)

There it is! You live in a *man-made* society. It is ordered, devised, constructed, planned and built by *human* beings, who have totally *departed* from their God.

These ancient chronologers did not *lose* four years, as some have feared. They just misplaced Christ's date of birth by pushing it backward four years on the calendar they had already devised.

Chances are, *you* have always just TAKEN FOR GRANTED that most of what you "*learned*" was RIGHT. You have accepted, literally *without question*, beliefs and practices that stemmed directly from the pagan sun-worshippers and idolaters of Babylon and Egypt, of Greece and Rome.

Jesus was born, *according to the man-devised and truly erroneous method of reckoning in use today*, in 4 B.C.! □